

Oct 16, 1997
THE LIBRARY
South
South Africa



Segregation.



BY THEO. L. SCHREINER, Esq.

SEGREGATION.

BY THEO. L. SCHREINER, ESQ.

We have all heard of the old woman who found immense comfort from the Minister's use of "that blessed word Mesopotamia"; and there is a certain class of Europeans in South Africa whose minds, rendered uneasy under the great and difficult problem of the Native Question, seem to find much comfort in the magic word "Segregation," and are seeking to impart that comfort to others.

The Editor of *The State*, Mr. Wybergh, M.L.A., Mr. C. F. Tainton, President of the South African Forward Party; M. H. W. Sampson, M.L.A., of the South African Labour Party; Mr. F. W. Bell (whose foundation principle is that the Native is, and must ever be, an essentially lower race than the European); the Hon. Dewdney Drew, M.L.C. (who honestly wishes the Native well); and Mr. H. J. Crocker—are among the principal exponents of this new gospel of comfort, and are actively proclaiming it by means of lectures, pamphlets, and the newspaper-press.

What the segregation which they preach really involves does not seem very clear either to themselves or to their hearers and readers, nor how it is to be practically carried out; and it may be of some public benefit to endeavour to ascertain and point out what is the essence of the policy advocated.

One fact stands out clearly, and that is that all these Segregationists are extremely desirous that the principle they advocate should be approved of by South Africa without any delay, while the details are to be left for future consideration.

Mr. Bell helps us to understand what that principle means by declaring that its "even-

tual goal" is "the ideal separation socially, industrially, politically, and geographically" of the black and white races in South Africa.

But even he, and others of the same school, are obliged to admit that the policy of removing the Natives from the lands they now occupy to a portion of the country "unsuited for white occupation"—or, as Mr. Crocker puts it, "to the tropical zone of the South African Continent"—cannot be put into execution at once, and that Basutoland and the Reserves at present occupied by Natives must continue for the present to be so occupied. In this they differ from the influential party that holds that "Basutoland, Swaziland, Zululand should be given up to the white people to live in," but it really comes to the same thing in the long run.

In seeking for an explanation of the persistency with which the adoption of the principle of segregation, as defined above, is being promulgated as an urgent necessity, we are met by the following facts:—(1) "Socially," segregation is already practically existent, *i.e.*, the two races do not mix socially nor intermarry, except to an infinitesimal extent, and there is no sign that this condition of things is changing, or will change, in the future; nor can social questions and issues whose roots lie much deeper than the ground covered by Acts of Parliament, be determined by them. (2) Segregation, "industrially," is an absolute impossibility, unless all our mines and public works, and even farming operations, to a large extent—not to speak of commercial and household services—are to come to a standstill, while South Africa is waiting for the half-million of white labourers, or workmen, or servants, who are to take the place of the Natives and do the work they are now doing. (3) Complete "geographical" segregation, or, even to any much greater extent than exists at present in Basuto-

land and the various Protectorates and Reserves, is also practically unattainable, unless the Natives are to be driven out by violence from the localities they now occupy. (4) We are shut up, then, to the conclusion that it is "political" segregation which is the immediate object of the segregationist propaganda: in other words, the object is to pave the way for the refusal of political privileges to civilised Natives in the Transvaal, O.R.C., and Natal, and for the taking away, by means of the two-thirds vote of the Union Parliament provided for in the Union Constitution, of the eligibility to be Parliamentary voters which the Natives of the Cape Colony now possess.

For it is clear that if once the Union Parliament can be induced, by hook or by crook, to endorse the principle of complete segregation between the black and white races, "socially, industrially, politically, and geographically," —it will matter little that "industrially" and "geographically" this cannot be carried out, and that "socially" there is no necessity for it because it already exists,—provided that "politically" the principle can immediately be carried out and enforced, so as to secure that no Native, however civilised, educated, or well-to-do, shall be allowed to exercise political rights where Europeans do—in other words, that such Natives, living in a district where Europeans have Parliamentary votes, shall, on account of their being Natives, be *ipso facto* excluded from the right to the franchise in connection with the Union Parliament. If such Natives desire to possess and exercise any political functions, they will be told that they must remove to, and live in, the area set apart for Natives only, where it is suggested that some sort of self-government under white supervision may be set up for them—which is all very well so far as it goes, but does not justify nor compensate for the refusal or de-

privation of political privileges to or from civilised natives living in electoral districts.

This, then, is the immediate crux of the whole scheme, and it is in fact simply an attempt, under a more or less honest or dishonest plea of consideration for the welfare of the Natives, to impose upon the whole of British South Africa, in a new form, that provision of the old Republican Constitution of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, which laid down that no coloured person should ever be allowed to have equal rights with the white man in Church or State.

It is true that most of the Segregationists profess themselves willing to draw a line between the Coloured man and the pure Native, and to allow that the former, as distinct from the latter, should be admitted to the Union Parliament franchise upon somewhat high civilisation qualifications, provided he votes separately from the white voter. The idea underlying this proposal is without doubt a clever one, namely—to detach the coloured man from supporting the civilised Native in his just claim for political privileges ; but the coloured population, it is to be hoped, may be trusted to see through this attempt to "divide and rule," and to stand firm with the civilised Native in the demand for the removal of colour disabilities all round.

Supposing such an unjust discrimination were to become a reality: instead of its diminishing the number of half-caste people, as the Segregationists assert, it will immensely increase them, if the only door to the securing of political privileges open to the civilised Native lies in the possession of some drops of European blood.

The astuteness with which the segregation scheme is put forward so as to inveigle various sections of the South African population into supporting it, is very marked.

Thus, both Europeans and Natives, as a rule, are opposed to miscegenation between the white and black races, and the Segregationists harp upon the fear—which is, after all, a mere bogey, not justified by any evidence—that, if political privileges are granted to civilised Natives, the result will be the sexual fusion of the two races; and for this, they incorrectly say, there is only one remedy, namely—complete segregation—*i.e.*, keeping the races entirely apart. This is nonsense, of course: but thus they endeavour, on a false issue, to win the support to their scheme of those who are opposed to such fusion.

Again, the Segregationists know well enough that the mining people and other employers of labour will certainly not agree to “industrial segregation,” which means the stoppage of the labour supply; but they nevertheless use the phrase and suggestion in order to secure the support of the white working man, and also, if possible, of the coloured working man, under the promise that he shall not be segregated, but have political privileges given him.

Once again, the principle of complete “geographical segregation,” notwithstanding the limitations on its full scope suggested by segregationists for the present, can be worked to suit the book of those white South Africans who hold that the Natives should be driven from the agricultural lands they now occupy, and that these should be given to Europeans, and the Natives forced out to work for the white man; and they will support the principle, as eventually playing into their hands.

At the same time, those who honestly believe that the Natives should never be dispossessed of these lands will, it is thought, have their fears allayed by the temporary limitations and exceptions suggested as to Basutoland and other Native Reserves, not realising that the “eventual goal” is to

dump the Native inhabitants of these Reserves down in the future land of segregation—wherever that may be.

Next, and most important, "political segregation," the attempt to secure which is the immediate object of the whole scheme, will be warmly supported by those who are filled with a more violent race and colour prejudice than most of the Segregationists themselves, who would deny every right of citizenship to all but Europeans, and who will find an excuse and salve for their consciences in the fact that the scheme proposes that the civilised Native shall have some kind of pseudo-political privileges among the Natives in the said land of segregation, but not elsewhere.

The Natives themselves are sought to be allured into support of the scheme by the brilliant word-pictures describing the happiness, advancement, and prosperity which the Segregationists draw of their lot when gathered together in that unknown Land of Canaan, which in reality, however, may and is likely to prove nothing but a desert of destruction.

Setting aside all these suggested bribes that the scheme offers to different sections of the population as being the mere garnishing of the dish, segregation pure and naked seems to mean only one thing, namely—the sacrifice of the black race of men for the benefit of the white, and it is a scheme not only unjust in many particulars—notably in its political aspect—but also an impracticable one, which takes no count of, and leaves no room for the orderings of a higher than human hand in the history of South Africa.

A segregation, such as already exists in South Africa, which is compatible with a free labour market, and with political privileges for all civilised men living in electoral districts, is a correct and just policy; and, further, it will be a wise and statesmanlike act on the part of

the Union Government to secure, in addition to existing Native Reserves, some large area for future occupation by such Natives as may be crowded out from the present Reserves owing to increase of population, or from the parts which Europeans own by natural economic causes, and in these Reserves local self-government should be granted to the Natives as far as may be possible.

These Reserves would, as a rule not be divided into electoral districts of the Union Parliament, except where such districts already exist and are recognised by the provisions of the Act of Union, as in the case of the Transkeian Territories and other parts of the Cape Colony; but should new electoral districts be created in any of these Reserves, no civilised man living in them should be debarred from eligibility for the franchise on account of his being a Native or Coloured man.

Such an arrangement as the above would seem fair enough all round, and if this were what the Segregationists propose, there would be but little fault to find with it; but to attempt to drive the Natives from other parts into these Reserves by force, under an Act of Parliament or otherwise, or to prohibit the Natives from freely supplying the labour or artisan market of South Africa, or to debar civilised educated British subjects who reside in any electoral districts of the Union Parliament from the franchise merely because they are Natives, is a segregation scheme which is most unwise, unstatesmanlike, and unjust, and which should not receive the support of anyone who believes that absolute justice and fairplay to all classes of the population is the only lasting foundation for a nation's permanent prosperity and welfare.